

We claim:

1. A method for ensuring a delivery of a product to a delivery destination within a predetermined delivery time period comprising the steps of:

receiving a delivery order from a customer, the delivery order containing product
5 information, delivery location and delivery time information;

processing the received delivery order;

shipping the order to the designated delivery location;

tracking the shipped order along a delivery route to assess the progress of the
shipment to the delivery destination; and

10 implementing an alternative delivery program, if said order tracking indicates that
the shipped order will not reach the delivery destination within the predetermined
delivery time as specified in the client delivery order.

2. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said delivery order processing step
15 further comprises the steps of:

recording the information contained in the client delivery order in a product
delivery database;

scheduling the received order with a product supplier; and

selecting a shipping and handling entity to ship the product.

20 3. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said shipping step further comprises
determining a delivery route for the product, the delivery route containing check points
for tracking the product during delivery.

25 4. The method as described in claim 3 wherein said check points can be geographic
points along the physical delivery route or time check points at designated times during
the delivery.

5. The method as described in claim 4 wherein said tracking step further comprises the steps of :

monitoring the checkpoints to determine the progress of the delivery;

calculating a revised delivery time based on the progress of the delivery; and

5 determining whether the predetermined product delivery time can be achieved based on the calculated and revised delivery time.

6. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said alternative delivery implementation step comprises:

10 contacting an alternative product supplier;

providing said alternative supplier with the client order containing product information, delivery location and delivery time information; and

shipping the product from the alternative supplier to the delivery destination.

15 7. The method as described in claim 6 further comprising the step of determining a delivery location for the initial product order to the customer.

8. The method as described in claim 7 wherein the initial product order is delivered to the initial delivery destination.

20 9. The method as described in claim 7 wherein initial product order is delivered to the location of the alternative product supplier.

10. The method as described in claim 1 wherein said alternative delivery
25 implementation step comprises exchanging the product of an alternative product supplier located in close proximity to the delivery location with the shipped product, the shipped product becoming part of the alternative supplier's product inventory.

11. The method as described in claim 7 wherein the product of the original product
30 order is returned to the initial product supplier.

12. A method for tracking the delivery of a product to a designated destination within a predetermined delivery time comprising the steps of:

receiving a delivery order from a customer, the delivery order containing information, which includes product information, product delivery location and product

5 delivery time information;

supplying a product and product information to a shipping and handling entity;

determining a delivery route for the product, the delivery route containing product handover points along the route for the product;

10 recording the transfer of the product order from the product supplier to the shipping and handling entity;

tracking the shipped order along a delivery route based on elapsed time to assess the progress of the shipment to the delivery destination; and

15 implementing an alternative delivery program, if said order tracking indicates that the shipped order will not reach the delivery destination within the predetermined delivery time as specified in the client delivery order.

13. The method as described in claim 12 further comprising after said transfer recording step, the step of informing the client of the transfer of the order from the supplier to the shipping and handling entity.

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14. The method as described in claim 12 wherein said recording step comprises entering the time of the transfer of the product from the supplier to the shipping and handling entity in a business tracking database.

25 15. The method as described in claim 12 wherein said tracking step comprises for each exchange of the product order from one shipping and handling to another shipping handling entity, recording the time of the exchange and the names of the shipping and handling entities involved in the exchange.

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16. The method as described in claim 15 wherein said tracking step further comprises establishing a critical time during the delivery process and determining at each shipping and handling exchange whether the delivery process has passed the critical time.

5 17. The method as described in claim 16 further comprising at each shipping and handling exchange determining whether a delivery will reach the designated destination in the predetermined delivery time based on the location and time of a particular exchange.

10 18. The method as described in claim 17 further comprising when there is a determination that the product will reach the designated destination, the steps of:
determining whether product has reached the predetermined destination; and
delivering the product when product has reached the predetermined destination.

15 19. The method as described in claim 17 further comprising when there is a determination that the product will not reach the designated destination, the steps of:
contacting an alternative product supplier;
providing said alternative supplier with the client order containing product information, delivery location and delivery time information; and
20 shipping the product from the alternative supplier to the delivery destination.

20. The method as described in claim 19 wherein the initial product order is delivered to the initial delivery destination.

25 21. The method as described in claim 19 wherein initial product order is delivered to the location of the alternative product supplier.

22. The method as described in claim 12 wherein said alternative delivery implementation step comprises exchanging the product of an alternative product supplier
30 located in close proximity to the delivery location with the shipped product, the shipped product becoming part of the alternative supplier's product inventory.

23. A computer program product in a computer readable medium for ensuring a delivery of a product to a delivery destination within a predetermined delivery time period comprising:

5 instructions for receiving a delivery order from a customer, the delivery order containing product information, delivery location and delivery time information;

instructions for processing the received delivery order;

instructions for shipping the order to the designated delivery location;

10 instructions for tracking the shipped order along a delivery route to assess the progress of the shipment to the delivery destination; and

instructions for implementing an alternative delivery program, if said order tracking indicates that the shipped order will not reach the delivery destination within the predetermined delivery time as specified in the client delivery order.

15 24. The computer program product as described in claim 23 wherein said delivery order processing instruction further comprises:

instructions for recording the information contained in the client delivery order in a product delivery database;

instructions for scheduling the received order with a product supplier; and

20 instructions for selecting a shipping and handling entity to ship the product.

25 25. The computer program product as described in claim 23 wherein said ship instruction further comprises instructions for determining a delivery route for the product, the delivery route containing check points for the product.

26 The computer program product as described in claim 25 wherein said tracking instruction further comprises:

instructions for monitoring the checkpoints to determine the progress of the delivery;

5 instructions for calculating a revised delivery time based on the progress of the delivery; and

determining whether the predetermined product delivery time can be achieved based on the revised delivery time.

10 27. The computer program product as described in claim 23 wherein said alternative delivery implementation instruction comprises:

instructions for contacting an alternative product supplier;

instructions for providing said alternative supplier with the client order containing product information, delivery location and delivery time information; and

15 instructions for shipping the product from the alternative supplier to the delivery destination.

20 28. The computer program product as described in claim 27 further comprising instructions for determining a delivery location for the initial product order to the customer.

29. The computer program product as described in claim 28 further comprising instructions for delivering the initial product order to the initial delivery destination.

25 30. The computer program product as described in claim 28 further comprising instructions for delivering initial product order to the location of the alternative product supplier.

30 31. The computer program product as described in claim 28 further comprising instructions for returning the initial product order to the to the initial product supplier.

32. The computer program product as described in claim 23 wherein said alternative delivery implementation instruction comprises instructions for exchanging the product of an alternative product supplier located in close proximity to the delivery location with the shipped product, the shipped product becoming part of the alternative supplier's product inventory.

33. A system for ensuring a delivery of a product to a delivery destination within a predetermined delivery time period comprising:

a communication interface for establishing communication between a client desiring to ship a product and a business entity that can ship the client's product, said communication interface enabling the client to submit purchase and shipping information to the business entity;

a program that can process any information received by the business entity from the client related to the purchase and shipment of the product;

a program for tracking the shipped order along a delivery route to assess the progress of the shipment to the delivery destination;

a switchover entity capable of implementing an alternative delivery program, when said tracking program indicates that the shipped order will not reach the delivery destination within the predetermined delivery time as specified in the client delivery order; and

a database component to store all product information related to the purchase, shipment and delivery of a client order.

34. The system as described in claim 33 wherein said processing program, tracking program, switchover entity and database component are contained in a server at one location.

35. The system as described in claim 33 wherein the communication between the client and the business entity occurs via said communication interface over a communication network.

36. The system as described in claim 33 wherein said switchover entity comprises a decision making component that determines whether to implement the alternative delivery program based on information from the tracking program.

5 37. The system as described in claim 36 wherein said decision making entity comprises switchover policies with guidelines that cover the implementation of alternative delivery programs and switchover logic that performs the actual alternative deliver program implementation.

10 38. The system as described in claim 33 wherein said database component comprises supplier and shipping and handling databases.

39. The system as descried in claim 38 wherein said supplier and shipping and handling databases are in different physical locations.

15 40. The system as described in claim 33 further comprising multiple servers, each server being in communication with said other servers, said servers being in different locations and containing said processing program, tracking program, switchover entity and database component.

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